

Public Abstract

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Title:A Case Study of Transformational Leadership Characteristics of a Principal in a High Poverty High Achieving School

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify and examine the characteristics of effective leaders in high-poverty, high-achieving schools in a single school district. Within the context of this inquiry, district and school success was measured through the level of student achievement described by the annual Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP) process (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2011). The results of this narrative case study will provide researchers a holistic view of the context in which the school of focus is situated and should enhance the current body of knowledge regarding leadership characteristics present in highly-effective schools located in high-poverty areas. Furthermore, new insights to the professional practices of principals as well as building and sustaining leadership capacity for high-poverty schools within school districts (Lambert, 2006) should be revealed. These findings should result in educational leaders who will be better prepared to respond to diversity, curriculum standards, program requirements, physical and mental disabilities, and produce high achievement (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) in high-poverty school settings.

The population included an urban elementary school located in Missouri was the setting for this narrative case study. A case study permitted this researcher to retain a holistic view and obtain meaningful characteristics of day-to-day, realistic events taking place within the research setting through interviews, focus groups, document and artifact analysis, and onsite observation (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). Data collections were comprised of interviews, focus groups, on-site observations, and document analysis. The interview and focus group protocols allowed the participants the opportunity to provide explanations and firsthand perspectives regarding their perspectives of the leadership style of the principal (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The results related to this research study are applicable for public school leaders who are facing the daunting task of school reform. Fullan, (2001) and Marzano (2003) contended the building principals is second only to the classroom teacher when it comes to positively impacting student achievement as the principal has a direct impact on student achievement.